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DE RUEHCV #1263 1301912
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R 101912Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4428
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 6431
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 1198
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ 1976
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 0206
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 2056
RUEHAO/AMCONSUL CURACAO 0793
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 0455
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0176

UNCLAS CARACAS 001263

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NSC FOR DAN TOMLINSON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [EAIR](#) [ETRD](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: CARACAS-LA GUAIRA BYPASS ROAD CLOSED AGAIN

REF: A. CARACAS 742

[1](#)B. CARACAS 459

This message is sensitive but unclassified, please treat accordingly.

[1](#)1. (SBU) On May 8, after heavy rains, a landslide blocked the newly-constructed Bridge Bypass Road (BBR) built to link Caracas to the main air and sea ports. The 2.5 km road, opened in late February as an alternate route after the closure and collapse of the highway bridge, has steep pitching and lacks metal containment netting in some areas. Traffic was diverted to the "Old Highway" and other alternate routes for nearly 20 hours, as Ministry of Infrastructure (MINFRA) teams cleared the debris. MINFRA announced that they had "planned" the landslide as a measure to avoid further damage down the line. (Note: This assertion is highly dubious, given that there were vehicles on the road when the landslide occurred. End Note.) On the morning of May 9, road traffic resumed, with restrictions on heavy and light traffic and intermittent closures. MINFRA is removing some loose material from the landslide and installing additional containment structures to contain susceptible loose rock.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On May 9, Post convened a meeting to discuss the effects of the closure. Since the closures are intermittent, Post has decided to not restrict Embassy travel, but rather encourage daylight travel, scheduling ample travel time, and taking a taxi rather than driving a personal vehicle on the bypass road. Post will continue to monitor the situation closely, and re-assess the situation in the case of permanent road closure.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Comment: The landslides on this road, given the onset of the rainy season, were predictable. We can expect this episode to repeat itself unless MINFRA can adequately reinforce the pitching to prevent landslide rubble from obstructing the road. The fact that MINFRA and other members of the BRV again declared that the damage was "intentional" shows that MINFRA's policy (and the way the BRV deals with infrastructure crises in general) is reactive and uncoordinated. Opposition media, as with the bridge closure, have taken this opportunity to blast Chavez for his poor record on this issue. End Comment.
BROWNFIELD